

the dignity and equality of every person of every race.

Our journey toward justice has not been easy, and it is not over. Yet I am confident that we will reach our destination. We have been called to great work in our time, and we will answer that call. We will defend our freedom, and we will lead the world toward peace. And we will unite America behind the great goals of opportunity for all and for compassion for those in need.

I want to thank each of you for serving this cause in your own lives. May God bless your work, may God bless the Urban League, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:17 a.m. at the David Lawrence Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, Sr., founder and president, Rainbow/PUSH Coalition; and Mayor James A. Garner of Hempstead, NY.

Statement on the International Initiative To Help Developing Countries Stop Illegal Logging

July 28, 2003

Today my administration has announced a new international initiative to help developing countries stop illegal logging. Illegal logging destroys biodiversity and hundreds of thousands of acres of forest habitat annually. It releases millions of tons of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Last year, I directed Secretary Powell to develop a plan to address this serious issue. I thank him for his efforts in establishing this initiative. Working with the private sector, nongovernmental organizations, and other nations, the United States will help identify and reduce threats to protected forest areas and other high-value conservation forests. These efforts will serve as a foundation for future actions to eliminate illegal logging, corruption in the forest sector, and the sale—including for export—of illegally harvested timber products. They will also help us protect forests and the livelihoods that depend upon them.

Statement on Signing the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003 and the Accompanying Executive Order

July 28, 2003

Today I have signed into law the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003 and an Executive order sending a clear signal to Burma's ruling junta that it must release Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, along with all other political prisoners, and move down the path toward democracy. These measures reaffirm to the people of Burma that the United States stands with them in their struggle for democracy and freedom.

The Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act is the result of close cooperation between my administration and Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle, especially Senator Mitch McConnell and Representative Tom Lantos. Among other measures, the legislation bans the import of Burmese products. The Executive order freezes the assets of senior Burmese officials and bans virtually all remittances to Burma. By denying these rulers the hard currency they use to fund their repression, we are providing strong incentives for democratic change and human rights in Burma.

In May of this year, the Burmese Government tightened its grip on the people of Burma when it organized an attack on the motorcade of Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD). Since then, Burmese officials have ignored requests from around the world to release Aung San Suu Kyi and other members of the NLD and to reopen NLD offices.

The repression of the Burmese regime contributes to problems that spill across Burma's borders, including refugee flows, narcotics trafficking, and the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases. These problems affect Burma's neighbors, and these nations must play an important role in resolving the current crisis. I urge the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) to continue to make clear to the regime that its